

STATE OF MINNESOTA

DISTRICT COURT

COUNTY OF RAMSEY

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER PERTAINING
TO COURTROOM ACCESS DURING
COVID-19 EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, On March 13, 2020, the Minnesota Governor Tim Walz declared a peacetime state of emergency pursuant to the issuance of Executive Order 20-01 due to the worldwide spread of COVID-19, also referred to as the Coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the Minnesota Supreme Court issued an Emergency Administrative Order addressing the continuing operations of Minnesota's courts under a statewide peacetime declaration of emergency, initially providing that courthouses will remain open, discouraging *non-essential* visits to courthouses, promoting the use of social distancing and other mitigation factors for individuals within the courthouses, and requiring that no person who has an elevated risk of transmitting the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 attend any in-court hearing or proceeding; and

WHEREAS, on March 20, 2020, in light of the continuing state of emergency and in an effort to further limit gatherings in public locations, the Minnesota Supreme Court issued a second Emergency Administrative Order providing that access to all court facilities shall be limited to only court staff and judicial officers and participants whose presence is required for scheduled court proceedings. Case participants may include parties, attorneys, and individuals who are required to be present for the proceeding at direction of the presiding judge. Media access shall be coordinated, with requests for access being made through the Judicial Branch Court Information Office. All in-person access to judicial branch facilities and services, including public access terminals, will be unavailable during this time. Courthouse staff will continue to be available via telephone, and unless required to file electronically, filings may be made by e-mail as directed by court administration, by mail, in a drop box designated for court filings, as available, or by other means provided by court administration; filing fees still apply; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 484.69, subd. 3, the chief judge of the judicial district has general administrative authority over the courts in the judicial district; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to protect the public, as well as court participants and court staff pursuant to the Order of the Minnesota Supreme Court, by ensuring only persons necessary for court proceedings, while ensuring that constitutional rights are preserved;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. Effective immediately, for all matters heard in any courthouse in this District, access to courtrooms and areas immediately outside the courtrooms, including court administration lobby areas, will be limited to the parties in the case who are participating in the hearing, attorneys who represent those parties, any necessary court staff, and other individuals the presiding judge determines are necessary to conduct the hearing. Representatives of the media are permitted to attend hearings held in courtrooms if coordinated through the Judicial Branch Court Information Office at least 24 hours before the time of the hearing.
2. The Ramsey County Sheriff's Office is hereby authorized to control the number of people in any courtrooms where hearings take place and to bar or remove persons from those courtrooms as necessary to comply with this Order. Furthermore, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office shall take steps to preclude anyone exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 from entering a courthouse facility.
3. Efforts will be made to accommodate remote appearances for every scheduled hearing.
4. For persons who have other court business, the courts will continue to accept filings in all case types. Unless required to file through the court's eFiling system, parties should submit filings by U.S. Mail. Filing fees still apply. Persons can call 651-266-8266 if they have questions about a court case, filing documents, or access to the courts.
5. This Order remains in full force and effect as long as the Supreme Court's Order limiting public access is in effect.

Dated: March 21, 2020

BY THE COURT:

John H. Guthmann
Chief Judge, Second Judicial District